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ABSTRACT

This paper provides guidelines for implementing a formal mentoring program for South African school principals. Based on a review of literature, the following steps are discussed in detail: (1) declaring intent; (2) determining the role players; (3) forming a planning committee; (4) implementing the program; and (5) evaluating the program. Benefits to the protege include increased self-confidence, improved interpersonal skills, the development of personal reflection, and application of theory to practice. Mentors gain personal growth, professional satisfaction, improved communication skills, heightened motivation, and the development of leadership skills. The appendix includes a diagram of the implementation stages. Contains 58 references. (LMI)

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GUIDELINES FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS BY MEANS OF A MENTORING SYSTEM IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

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GUIDELINES FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS BY MEANS OF A MENTORING SYSTEM IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

The application of mentoring systems is a general practice in countries abroad. The professional developmental needs of school principals in the Republic of South Africa may also be addressed by the implementation of mentoring systems. Determinants for successful mentoring exist and they should be taken into account when developing and implementing a formal mentoring programme for school principals. Development and implementation of a mentoring programme should be done in cyclical steps because professional development implies a continuous process during the various stages of an individual's career.

1. Introduction

From a review of research results in England (Weindling & Earley, 1987), the USA (Barnett, 1990; Daresh & Playko, 1989, 1992a, 1992b) and the RSA (Van der Westhuizen & Janson, 1990), it appears that the beginner school principal experiences certain problems during the first three years in his new post. According to the said research, problems are particularly prevalent in respect of role fulfilment, management skills, integration with new staff, pupils, the environment and socialisation. In traditional management training programmes (Daresh & Playko, 1992a : 1-2), educational managers are not trained to deal with these problems. Consequently, and this is particularly so of the USA, alternative methods were investigated and developed to enable the school principal to integrate effectively in his/her new work environment and to support him/her in doing so. Van der Westhuizen (1990 : 2) points out that although school principals in the RSA are trained teachers, many of them have not yet received managerial training in their new task. This situation contributes to the fact that beginner principals in the RSA experience certain problems with integration (Van der Westhuizen & Janson, 1990 : 495).

In England and the USA the in-service training and professional development of the beginner principal is already a recognised practice (Weindling & Earley, 1987 : 1-7; Daresh & Playko, 1992a : 1), whereas the professional development of the beginner principal in the RSA has been neglected (Van der Westhuizen, 1990 : 1-4).

From recent research (as mentioned above) it also appears that beginner school principals require professional development opportunities such as a formal mentoring system (Daresh, 1988 : 7), and that the existing management training programmes for school principals are in need of revision (Murphy & Hallinger, 1987 : 247).

Research (Daresh, 1988 : 1; Healy & Welchert, 1990 : 17) has found that, where experienced school principals fulfil the role of mentors on behalf of their less experienced colleagues, the development programmes for beginner school principals are of immense value for the professional development of both the mentor (experienced school principal) as well as the less experienced colleague (beginner school principal). A well-developed and structured mentoring system of this nature does not as yet exist for school principals in the RSA, even though Daresh (1993) is of the opinion that the mentoring system has been a huge success in countries where it has been implemented, such as the USA, England, the Netherlands and Israel.

The question that arises from the above is how to enable beginner school principals, in particular, to develop professionally by means of a mentoring system.

The paper below focuses on a number of guidelines for the implementation of a formal mentoring programme for school principals.

2. Definitions of terms

Professional development

Professional development may be regarded as an ongoing process in anyone's career, in the sense that one continues to learn and to develop in a post (Daresh & Playko, 1989 : 9; Buchmann, 1990 : 1; the Department of Manpower, 1992 : 22).

Daresh & Playko (1992a : 210) describe professional development in terms of three clearly identifiable phases in one's career, i.e. pre-service training, induction and continuous in-service training.

For the purposes of this paper, professional development may be defined as all those activities that are aimed at the personal growth and development of an individual in order to enable him/her to understand the nature of a post and to meet the demands of that post. Furthermore, professional development is aimed at the continuous provision of supportive activities and feedback mechanisms to enable the individual to acquire advice from a more experienced school principal regarding the way in which he is executing his task.

Mentor

In the literature a mentor is defined as an experienced, skilful and expert person who accepts the responsibility of creating opportunities that will enable less experienced people to grow personally and to develop professionally (Daresh & Playko, 1989 : 5-6; Pruett, 1990 : 1-2; Green, Holmes & Shaw, 1991 : 14; Stott & Walker, 1992 : 154).

For the purposes of this paper, a mentor may be regarded as an experienced and expert school principal who assumes the responsibility of sharing and manifests the desire to share his/her acquired knowledge and skills with a less experienced adult/protégé (beginner school principal) by supporting him/her, by giving guidance and by serving as a role model during the initial period of the protégé's occupying the post.

Protégé

On the whole, a protégé is defined as a protected person who is dependent on the guidance and support of a more experienced colleague in order to be able to master the skills required for a particular post (Daresh, 1988 : 4; Green, Holmes & Shaw, 1991 : 14).

A protégé may therefore be seen as a less experienced school principal (beginner school principal) who accepts responsibility for his/her own professional development by depending on a mentor (experienced school principal) for help in acquiring the necessary skills, and for forming his/her own professional convictions in order to function effectively in the new post.

Mentorship/mentoring system

Many writers regard mentorship as a dynamic, reciprocal work relationship between an experienced office-bearer (mentor) and a newcomer within an organisation (protégé), where the work relationship is aimed at the professional development of both participants (Daresh, 1988 : 4; Levine, 1989 : 240; Moerdyk & Louw, 1989 : 24; Healy & Welchert, 1990 : 17; Playko, 1990 : 29; Stott & Walker, 1992 : 154).

For the purposes of this paper, mentorship or a mentoring system may be defined as those activities that take place during the induction phase of the protégé (beginner school principal), when a mentor (experienced school principal) and a protégé bind themselves within a work relationship to the professional development of both persons.

Mentoring programme

A mentoring programme describes how a mentoring system functions in a particular institution, and it normally has an initial stage as well as a point at which it closes (Gibble & Lawrence, 1987 : 2; Barnett, 1990 : 17-18).

A mentoring programme refers to a specific, structured, formal, professional developmental activity where use is made of a mentoring system/mentorship and which can be linked to a particular institution.

institutions in England, two in Canada, one in Australia and one in Israel. One institution in England, two in Canada, one in Australia and eight in the USA reacted to this correspondence.

3. Guidelines for the development and implementation of a mentoring programme for school principals

As a result of the above investigation, the following determinants were identified in the development and implementation of a mentoring programme:

- The mentor
- The protégé
- Tertiary institutions
- The education authority
- The mentor system

Based on these determinants, the steps for the development and implementation of a mentoring programme for school principals are given in Figure 1 (Appendix A).

The five cyclical steps in Figure 1 will now be elucidated.

Step 1: Declaration of intent

A declaration of intent by the education authority concerned is extremely important in the implementation of an effective mentoring programme for school principals (Pruett, 1990 : 2; Daresh & Playko 1992a : 123). Since tertiary institutions fulfil a role as a determinant in any mentoring programme with regard to the provision of a basis of knowledge, a theoretical foundation, and the latest research findings, mutual co-operation between the education authorities and the relevant tertiary institution as a developmental party is of the utmost importance. The declaration of intent of the education authority concerned should, therefore, be based on such an input on the part of the tertiary institution (Murphy & Hallinger, 1987 : 247). A statement of policy in which the education authority supports a mentoring programme will provide a basis for the development of a mentoring programme by a planning committee.

Step 2: Composition of a planning committee

A planning committee can be compiled in two different ways. On the one hand, such a committee

consists of experienced school principals and superintendents who design a mentoring programme under the guidance of the regional director. On the other hand, experts at tertiary institutions can assume the responsibility of designing a mentoring programme for beginner school principals within a specific region, in collaboration with the relevant department of education. The activities of a planning committee ought to be directed at the development of a mentoring programme as a means of inducting beginner school principals when new appointments are made (Daresh & Playko, 1992a : 123-124).

Step 3: Determining the role-players

Three role-players, in particular, are important determinants in a mentoring programme, i.e. the mentor, the protégé (as employees of a department of education) and the tertiary institution.

As far as the *mentor* is concerned, the selection/identification of suitable mentors, the requirements such a person will have to meet, the responsibilities of a mentor, and the purposeful training of such a person for his/her task as mentor are of particular significance (Green, Holmes & Shaw, 1991 : 4; Daresh & Playko, 1992a : 149; Cohn & Sweeney, 1992 : 4).

To be noted in the *protégé* is the identification of his/her developmental needs and the provision of training for his/her role within the mentoring programme.

The role of a *tertiary institution* (also see Step 1) in a mentoring programme is seen as the contribution that can be made by such an institution (Daresh & Playko, 1992a : 18) with regard to

- the provision of a scientific basis of knowledge and a theoretical foundation for the mentorship, and
- making available research findings on mentorship.

The appointment of a *co-ordinator* for the mentoring programme who, among others, accepts responsibility for the training of mentors, can be done by either the education authority or a tertiary institution or it may be undertaken jointly (Stott & Walker, 1992 : 160).

The placement of suitable mentors with protégés, as well as decisions about which professional developmental activities are to be carried out during the mentorship, are important steps. The ideal, namely that the protégé should choose the mentor with whom he/she will be placed, is not always attainable. The placement of mentors and protégés who will adapt to one another within a professional developmental relationship, does not always appear to be an easy matter. If there is an individual awareness of values, mutual trust and respect, and a sense of openness within a potential mentoring relationship, the chances are that the mentorship will be successful (Castetter, 1986 : 181).

The mentor and the protégé together decide on the developmental programme for the latter. Aspects that arise here are, on the one hand, the induction of the beginner school principal in the new school environment and, on the other hand, his/her continued professional developmental activities that link up with his/her developmental needs (Daresh & Playko, 1992a : 18).

During this step both the participants plan the specific activities that are to be observed during the year, as well as the way in which feedback is to be given. Provision must also be made for unforeseen circumstances arising due to changes in the school programme, as well as for other developmental needs that the beginner school principal may experience during the year (Barnett, 1990 : 20; Cohn & Sweeney, 1992 : 6).

Step 4: Implementation of the programme

Continuous organisational, technical and interpersonal support for the participants is essential for the successful implementation of the mentoring programme. The planning committee can make a valuable contribution in terms of the continuous evaluation of the mentoring programme.

The mentoring programme furthers the professional development of the beginner school principal during the induction phase of his/her career. It is vitally important that as many contact sessions as possible should take place. During these contact sessions attention should be given not only to the extent of the beginner school principal's acquisition of management skills, but also to his/her professional forming (Daresh & Playko, 1992a : 18).

During the formal mentoring period, participants are in turn given an opportunity to observe each other's actions and management behaviour, after which reflective interviews are conducted. The mentor must provide the beginner school principal with feedback on an ongoing basis about the way in which he/she performs his/her task, so that he/she can learn, in the practical work situation, how to occupy the post effectively. This is also the most important way in which professional development can occur. The mentor and the protégé together plan the aspects that are to be observed and what will be dealt with in the reflective interview.

During the formal mentoring period, the mentor should perform the following functions: advising, communicating, consulting, giving guidance, being a role model, protecting and developing management skills (Daresh, 1988 : 4-6; Daresh & Playko, 1989 : 5-6). The professional development of the beginner school principal ought, within the mentoring programme, to focus on the role of the school principal, the acquisition of management skills, the socialisation of and the professional forming of the beginner school principal.

On completion of the formal mentoring period, the mentor, the protégé and the co-ordinator meet for consultations. During this retrospective meeting, the completed mentoring activities are discussed and analysed so that amendments can be made for the next formal mentoring period.

Hereafter, another period follows during which the mentoring activities are performed by the participants, followed by another retrospective meeting.

- Time guidelines for a mentoring programme: the time schedules within which the mentoring activities are occurring, are determined by the protégé's developmental needs and are established by both the participants during the planning of the mentoring activities (Stott & Walker, 1992 : 154; Tickell, 1991; Smith, 1991; Scott & McGinley, 1991; Pienaar, 1992; Ebersohn, 1992).

The following time guidelines therefore serve as possible indications of the period of time within which a mentoring programme could be developed and implemented:

- Training and orientation: the training and orientation of mentors and protégés is dealt with in the following two ways under the guidance of the co-ordinator:

  Separate training (mentors and protégés): three days
  Combined orientation: one day

- The formal mentoring period: the formal mentoring period is implemented in two sessions of one month each, during which the following occurs:

Observation sessions: one day a week
Reflective interview: one hour

- Retrospection: the co-ordinator of the mentoring programme is responsible for the review following each completed formal mentoring period, which takes place during two retrospective meetings of one day each

As a result of the complex and personal nature of the mentoring relationship, the above time guidelines only serve as a possible framework within which a mentoring programme for school principals could be implemented.

Step 5: Evaluation of the mentoring programme

Since a mentoring programme is cyclical by nature, the continuous evaluation of such a programme is essential so that amendments and improvements can be made.

It would be advisable to do evaluation on an annual basis in order to determine whether the programme is succeeding in its aim. Such evaluation should be continuous in terms of the value of the mentoring programme for the professional development of both the mentor and the beginner school principal, since the mentoring programme has advantages for both the participants.

The evaluation of the mentoring programme can be based on the following four aspects (Daresh & Playko, 1992a : 123):

- **Context evaluation:** The influence of the environment on the mentoring programme ought to be evaluated on the basis of factors such as the circumstances within the community, the financial situation of the school region, the attitudes of the school staff in respect of the mentoring programme, and unforeseen events that are experienced by the relevant school or school region.

- **Input evaluation:** The effective application of all resources in the mentoring programme ought to be evaluated as well.

- **Process evaluation:** It is important to evaluate whether the mentoring programme is being implemented according to the written planning of the programme, as compiled by the planning committee.

- **Evaluation of result:** Whether or not the mentoring programme has succeeded in its aim should also be established. Unplanned results that arise during the mentoring programme should also be noted. The mentoring programme is evaluated in respect of the results for both the protégé and the mentor.

 # Advantages/results for the protégé

The development of self-confidence and management skills
The application of management theory to management practice
Improved interpersonal skills
The learning of task-related strategies within the framework of the post of school principal
Personal reflection
Professional forming
Personal professional development

Advantages/results for the mentor

Personal growth
Professional satisfaction
Improved communication skills
Work satisfaction
Motivation
Recognition of colleagues
The development of leadership skills
The establishment of support networks with other school principals

From the above it would appear, therefore, that evaluation, rectification and implementation are the three main cyclical elements for the continuous functioning of an effective mentoring programme for beginner school principals.

In order to design a continuing mentoring programme for the following year, amendments ought to be made on the basis of evaluation. Hereafter, the programme can be picked up at Step 3, i.e. with the determination of the role-players in the new programme.

4. Résumé

In this paper certain guidelines have been put forward for the development and implementation of a mentoring programme for school principals. Research results have served as a frame of reference for the identification of the main determinants that can influence the provision of guidelines for the development of a mentoring programme.

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APPENDIX A

Figure 1 **Steps for the development and implementation of a mentoring programme for school principals**